

# Editorial

## Conflict of interest

Orthopedics is a specialty that has a continuous and steady progress, especially with regard to materials development.

Thanks to constant investment in the importation of new instruments, the maintenance of medical education programs, the sponsorship of conferences and visits by foreign experts, the deployment of Brazilian experts abroad, orthopedic supply companies and the pharmaceutical industry have made a substantial contribution that has been fundamental to the development and maintenance of Orthopedics in Brazil.

To deny these facts would be childish and hypocritical.

These companies' relationships with their customers are based on principles that are relevant to their systems of marketing and are independent of the will or the interference of the Brazilian Society of Orthopedics and Traumatology (SBOT, Sociedade Brasileira de Ortopedia e Traumatologia) or any ethics committee.

Offering gifts, trips, or dinners and sponsoring conferences are ways that professionals from these companies have to attract the doctors' attention to their products. They are skilled in using these attractions and know that only doctors can use their products, for without an indication or prescription, the entire marketing effort would be futile.

The doctor is governed by a written ethical system, which is our code of ethics, of which we are very proud, and an inner code, which is much more important.

By treating a patient, our relationship with accountability is much deeper than what the code of ethics establishes; an error, even if unintentional, will affect us deeply for life.

Our ethics differ profoundly from that of the medical supply industry and the pharmaceutical industry; it is neither better nor worse, it's different.

Our relationship with these industries is personal, based on our training principles and respecting our code of ethics, which is little updated in this regard. There are no clear current rules that establish what is lawful or unlawful in the professional relationship between the doctor and the surgical supply and pharmaceutical industries.

The American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons (AAOS) has recently established a very strict code, with 17 chapters, to mediate the relationship between companies and doctors, which it called the "Code of Medical Ethics and Professionalism for Orthopaedic Surgeons."

This code seeks to establish rules regarding the relationship between orthopedic surgeons and the industries dealing with consulting, product development, conferences, and other points. This same code requires that, in presentations at conferences and in scientific publications, the authors declare whether there is a conflict of interest.

There is a conflict of interest when there is a situation in which the doctor or someone close to her/his family has a financial relationship with the company whose product is the subject of the study being presented.

The National Health Surveillance Agency (ANVISA, Agência Nacional de Vigilância Sanitária) has a written model about this relationship, and the Federal Council of Medicine (CFM, Conselho Federal de Medicina) determined the compulsory declaration of conflict of interest in Article 2 of resolution 1595/2000, which defines thus:

"Determines that doctors, when giving lectures or writing articles publicizing or promoting pharmaceutical products or equipment for use in medicine, declare the financial agents that sponsor their research and/or presentations (...)."

With regard to scientific publications, it is of interest to us to declare this relationship and allow the reader to judge the influence of the authors' relationship with the company that produces or sells the product that is the subject of the publication and if this interferes with the conclusions of the study in question.

In the RBO, Brazilian Journal of Orthopaedics, we require authors to declare whether or not there is a conflict of interest in the study that is being published.

We believe it is one more piece of information that, combined with the authors' title and source for the study, will qualify the topic being consulted.

Proceeding in this way, we are merely following a decision by the CFM and a worldwide trend to inform the reader about the origins of studies that will be read and interpreted, providing support for their applicability in practice.

Gilberto Luis Camanho  
Editor-in-Chief